

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SEOUL 05721 090438Z
ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SEOUL 5721

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, KS, US, MPOL
SUBJECT: CURRENT DEFENSE PROBLEMS

1. IN CONVERSATION LAST EVENING WITH ME, LT. GENERAL LEW, DIRECTOR OF JOINT STAFF, DISCUSSED THREE KEY PROBLEMS FROM ROK/MND VIEWPOINT IN WEAPONS AREA.
2. LEW SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN CRUCIAL MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PAK JULY 8 ON QUESTION OF TANK PROCUREMENT, WHICH HE ASKED TO HOLD CLOSELY. MEETING WAS THIRD SESSION ON SUBJECT WITH THE PRESIDENT. DECISION REACHED TENTATIVELY WAS NOT REPEAT NOT TO GO AHEAD WITH LEOPARD PRODUCTION PROGRAM PUSHED BY BLUE HOUSE SECRETARY O WON CHOL. DECISION WAS CONTINGENT, HOWEVER, UPON U.S. WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN M48A5 PROGRAM, SINCE ROKG FELT STRONGLY IT MUST HAVE 105 MM GUN IN SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF ITS TANKS. WHILE ROKG IS PREPARED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH PROGRAM OF EQUIPPING PART OF ITS TANK FORCE WITH M48A3 WITH 90 MM GUNS, IT HAS CONCLUDED THAT, LOOKING AHEAD TO 80'S AND STRONG PROSPECT THAT NORTH KOREANS WILL ACQUIRE LATER GENERATION SOVIET TANKS, IT MUST HAVE 105 MM EQUIPPED TANKS. LEW SAID KOREANS RECOGNIZE PROBLEM OF AMMUNITION SHORTAGE FOR 105'S BUT ARE PREPARED TO SET UP AMMUNITION PRODUCTION LINE FOR BOTH 105'S AND 90 MM GUNS.

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3. LEW WAS CLEARLY PLEASED BY THIS DECISION SINCE IT REPRESENTED VICTORY FOR MND OVER O WON CHOL, AND URGED THAT WE SUPPORT EFFORT FULLY. HE COMMENTED THAT O WON CHOL FAILED TO COMPREHEND SPECIALIZED PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN DEFENSE PRODUCTION, PARTICULARLY NEED FOR HIGH QUALITY CONTROL, AND SUGGESTED THAT WE EMPHASIZE THIS POINT DURING SCM DISCUSSION OF DEFENSE PRODUCTION.

4. LEW SECONDLY RAISED WITH ME QUESTION OF IMPROVED CHAPPARAL, AS DID GOLD STAR PRESIDENT PAK IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION. BOTH PRESSED VERY HARD FOR AFFIRMATIVE U.S. DECISION DURING SCM. I TOLD THEM QUESTION UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION.

5. FINALLY, LEW PRESSED KOREAN REQUEST FOR LANCE MISSILES I TOLD LEW THAT I SAW NO PROSPECT FOR KOREAN ACQUISITION OF LANCE AND STRONGLY URGED THAT KOREANS NOT PRESS THIS POINT AT SCM. LEW SAID THAT ROKG UNDERSTANDS THAT LANCE NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN CONVENTIONAL MODE, BUT STILL SEEKS IT FOR 80'S.
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